

Original article
UDC [371.3:1]:[1:615.851]

PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN AND PHILOSOPHY AS THERAPY

Marjan Šimenc

Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana,
Slovenia
marjan.simenc@pei.si

Received: 5 February 2014

The article is based on the criticism of philosophy for children (PFC) being considered as part of the culture of therapy. This criticism claims that PFC treats children as “fragile and vulnerable” and that the PFC programme, which primarily aims at enhancing social and emotional skills, in fact contributes to the dependency and frailty of children. The article comes to the defence of PFC by presenting arguments against this reproach and goes on to analyse the concept that is in the heart of this criticism, i.e. the relationship between philosophy and therapy. In this context, a reference is made to Wittgenstein’s concept of philosophy as therapy which proves to be instrumental in reflecting on the relationship between academic philosophy and philosophical practices as well as in considering the fundamental goals of philosophy for children.

Key words: *philosophy for children, culture of therapy, philosophy as therapy, Ludwig Wittgenstein*

I

The “Perspectives of Philosophy” in the title of the symposium are in plural, which implies that there are several perspectives. One possible approach to the issue proposed in the title would be to compare several philosophical perspectives; another would be to describe a perspective that is particularly relevant. In my contribution, I shall attempt to do both.

Philosophical practices are new approach to philosophy, whereas the old, well-established, prevalent approach could be referred to as ac-

ademic philosophy.¹ The attitude of academic philosophy towards new philosophical practices has evolved gradually. Teaching philosophy in secondary schools can be considered a predecessor of contemporary philosophical practices. In the eyes of academic philosophy, teaching philosophy in school was a welcome addition as it expanded its horizon. Nevertheless, teaching philosophy was viewed as something extrinsic to philosophy: true philosophy consists in philosopher's thinking and writing, perhaps lecturing, all else is merely the popularisation of philosophy.

As philosophical practices advanced, gained autonomy, and started claiming their own inherent *philosophicity*, the attitude of academic philosophy towards philosophical practices went through several stages. The first stage was ignorance: this development was neither noticed nor mentioned. Then the criticism came: this was not actual philosophy, as children doing *philosophy for children* (PFC), for instance, do not actually philosophise, since they are not capable of reflective thinking, so this cannot be real philosophy. Finally, academic philosophy accepted the new field, but this acceptance mostly consisted in tolerating these new philosophical practices, only rarely were they considered as a chance to revitalise philosophy.

On the other hand, the discourse within new philosophical practices has also been evolving. The advocacy for the possibility of practical philosophy came first, followed by presentation of its methods and descriptions of practices and experience. Later on, an analysis, assessment and criticism of certain working methods also followed. Clearly, philosophical practices have attained autonomy (which is corroborated by the establishment of organisations, journals, and expert networks) and philosophical legitimacy. Even this conference is a case in point. There is no longer a struggle for recognition, no sense of threat, so the question that arises is what shapes the relationship between the two areas. In my contribution, I shall argue in favor of the hypothesis that a dialogue between the two perspectives can provide a better understanding of both of them. I shall illustrate this using the example of therapy and philosophy for children.

¹ Further elaboration of this distinction and the argument for the “non-university philosophy” could be found in the study *Philosophy, A School of Freedom* (UNESCO, 2007).

II

To make my point, let me briefly recapitulate the discussion that has mostly been implicit, a discussion that starts with school and therapy, and continues with the inclusion of philosophy. The story begins with the criticism of contemporary culture. Frank Furedi (Furedi, 2004), a sociologist who is engaged enough to merit a place in the tradition of critical theory of society, pointed to a strong presence of therapeutic discourse in contemporary society and to the negative consequences of this *therapeutic turn* for the autonomy of the subject. In their book *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* theorists of education Ecclestone and Haynes use this thesis when analysing changes in the field of education.

The authors focus on the general inclination of contemporary culture which is based on a specific understanding of mankind. The contemporary man is considered to be sensitive, vulnerable, fragile and therefore in need of protection and help. We are all weak, burdened, we all suffer from poor self-esteem. The individual's need for assistance is reflected in the classroom: it has given rise to new working methods such as opening up to one another, conversation, teaching emotional literacy, cooperation. Most importantly, in schools these skills are beginning to take precedence over content, knowledge, understanding and the truth. Compared to the traditional structure of education, this process entails a twofold reduction: a reduction of the purpose of school and a reduction of the individual. The primary aim of schools is no longer to transmit knowledge and foster intellectual autonomy and emancipation, but to provide assistance to the helpless individual. The authors believe that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy: because the children are being treated as “frail, vulnerable and in need of support”, that is precisely what they become.

The authors also refer to philosophy for children in this context. Two distinct references are made here. The first admits that certain activities contained in the description of the PFC programme focus on discussing philosophical issues, whereas

“... other interventions presented as PFC are imbued with social and emotional purposes and outcomes, including feeling good about yourself and others, being respectful, empathetic and disagreeing in ‘appropriate’ ways, how to deal with ‘hurt’ feelings...” (Ecclestone, Hayes, 2009, 33)

The second reference suggests that the *social and emotional purposes* mentioned above are in fact symptomatic of *manipulations of education and social engineering*:

“Subjects such as ‘philosophy for children’ use therapeutic rituals to train children in empathy, respect, ‘appropriate’ ways of listening, tolerating diverse views and responding in particular ways in order to be emotionally literate, tolerant citizens...” (Ecclestone, Hayes, 2009, 151)

Joanna Haynes (Haynes, 2014) speaks in defence of PFC. She concurs that PFC does entail some difficulties that she believes are the result of insufficient philosophical education of the teachers. However, she points out that the *social and emotional purposes* are a legitimate constituent of PFC:

“Human flourishing and consolation in the face of suffering have been among the concerns of philosophers and it is not surprising that these should be among the questions pursued by children. As much as they enjoy the adventurous space provided by PFC, children also welcome the opportunity to listen and to be heard and they describe the sense of feeling cared for and not being alone, when others listen to them.” (Haynes, 2014, 7)

She also adds that in its core PFC is not only a part of the therapeutic culture, but in fact a place where it is possible to withstand this culture:

“PFC is one of the few educational perspectives that does not trivialise and infantilise children. It engages the voice of self-expression and the voice of social action. It promotes both passionate and dispassionate dialogue: talking about things that matter with children in ways that go beyond a repetition of the given.” (Haynes, 2014, 6)

The content of her response shows that she is coming to the defence of PFC. It was a timely intervention mostly targeting teachers, parents and general public, and an immediate attempt to refute the unfounded criticism of PFC. Consequently, Haynes does not analyse the concept of therapy. More specifically, it remains unclear whether PFC can in any way be connected to therapy and if so, whether this connection can be founded in philosophy. Can philosophy be considered as therapy?

III

The answer is multi-faceted. Philosophy today is not considered as therapy. University professors lecturing in philosophy may see them-

selves as historians, custodians, sounding boards for philosophy, but definitely not as therapists. Nevertheless, a strong correlation between philosophy and therapy can be observed in the centre of the philosophical tradition at the time of its early beginnings in ancient Greece as well as at the beginning of the 20th century. Jeremy Wisniewski (Wisniewski, 2003) has detected “five forms of philosophical therapy” in the history of philosophy. Pierre Hadot and his thesis that ancient philosophy was inextricably linked to spiritual exercise and personal transformation was not even mentioned there, however the list does include the icon of 20th century philosophy Ludwig Wittgenstein. If philosophy for children is founded on philosophical tradition, there is no reason why it should refuse any connection to therapy.

According to Hadot, in ancient philosophy “philosophical discourse, then, originated in a choice of life and an existential option”, so “consequently, philosophy is above all a way of life, but one which is intimately linked to philosophical discourse” (Hadot, 2002, 4). “The original and authentic conception of Greco-Roman philosophy” and its “existential dimension” have been never completely forgotten, however philosophy was dominated by the “scholastic teaching of philosophy which has always had a tendency to emphasize the theoretical, abstract, and conceptual side of philosophy” (Hadot, 2002, 237). “The practice of philosophy” is considered to be “an effort to become aware of ourselves, our being-in-the-world, and our being-with-others (...), an effort to ‘relearn how to see the world’”. The models of Greek philosophy can be relevant in modern time, since they “correspond to permanent, fundamental attitudes which all human beings find necessary when they set about seeking wisdom” (Hadot, 2002, 278). This model of philosophy also entails philosophical reflection, since “living as a philosopher also means to reflect, to reason, to conceptualize in a rigorous, technical way – or, as Kant used to say, ‘to think for oneself’” (Hadot, 2002, 280).

The link between philosophy and therapy construed in this way is compatible with philosophy in school. The aim is not a weak, dependent individual, but the correlation of reflection critical thinking–being–judging–acting.

Furthermore, philosophy for children may be able to find some answers within its own tradition, with its own founder. When Lipman (Lipman, 2008) speaks of the impulse that had brought him from academic philosophy to the risky undertaking of the PFC project, he often

refers to student riots and the response of universities to these riots. In his interpretation, the strongest incentive for starting the PFC project came from the lack of thinking. His university students were not thinking, neither were the universities. The first can be related to the fact that the students did not have the appropriate habits and skills. But the lack of reflection on the side of institutions is related to the societal effect of that individual lack of competence. In this context, PFC can be seen as having twofold therapeutic role. It can be therapeutic for the individual by liberating them of their inability of independent thinking and, consequently, it can be therapeutic for society by liberating it of reckless convictions that lead to confusion. Philosophy for children is a school of critical thinking and a school of critical questioning of one's own beliefs, actions, and values.

Lipman clearly sees great therapeutic potential in critical thinking and he is not alone. Elliot C. Cohen views philosophy as a method of correcting flawed thinking. He believes that flawed thinking leads to flawed action and he is therefore convinced that critical thinking can bring on changes in the life of the individual.

“Free thinking aims at helping to expose the irrational, self-defeating, and destructive ideas that foreclose the human potential for productivity and happiness. It aims at overcoming these irrational ideas and replacing them with rational ones. It provides the logical tools and skill-building exercises that can help you see through the sophistry and twisted logic that underlies a closed society – one that fails to apply rational methods to come to grips with human problems.” (Cohen, 2009, 1)

In her book with the title *Thinking Your Way to Freedom*, Susan Gardner argues that critical thinking is not merely a *thinking skill*; it also entails an existential and ethical dimension. Conscious control over practical judgments means a conscious control over one's values which in turn results in control over one's actions. Critical thinking leads to autonomy and autonomy leads to freedom. As she puts it: “*Thinking through value issues impartially can thus be considered (...) the principle of freedom*” (Gardner, 2009, 41). Rational thinking thus leads to *human excellence* and teaching critical thinking leads to personal transformation that enables individuals who engage in *practical reasoning* to “free themselves from determining powers of social influence and, in so doing, make autonomy and its existential counterpart, individuality, possible” (Gardner, 2009, 41). The aim of critical thinking is not to

affect the level of thinking, but the level of existence – the aim is a free person, an *individuality*.

All the above expositions clearly show that critical thinking in itself has a therapeutic value. However, practical experience shows that this conclusion is far too optimistic: mere teaching of critical thinking is not sufficient when it comes to achieving more ambitious goals. Even Lipman himself was forced to confess that pupils are quickly bored by the teaching of critical thinking. The reason why the scope of critical thinking is so limited is in the very narrow concept of human being that is usually assumed in the field of education, namely the concept of human being as an individual who has certain beliefs and values. In fact, the true nature of the relationship between the individual and his or her beliefs and values is not the one of “having”, but rather the one of “being”. In a sense, beliefs and values are abstract notions that do not exist in the individual’s reality. They only exist in theories and if they come into existence for the individual, this can only be as a result of reflection.

How can the possible therapeutic effects of PFC then be considered? At this point, the answer to this question must be deferred in order to point out a different aspect, namely the role of this question. My thesis is that this question can in fact act as an answer, namely as an answer to the question what is the appropriate perspective of the relationship between academic and practical philosophy.

To put things in very schematic terms: the dialogue between practical and academic philosophy should tackle the subjects that put both perspectives in a quandary and should primarily focus on points where both perspectives are faced with their own impotence. Philosophy for children prides itself on its practical effects, but it is at a loss when trying to approach these effects in a systematic way. Academic philosophy, on the other hand, has no difficulty with self-reflection as such, but it is ill at ease reflecting on its relevance in the contemporary world.

At the same time, it can be said that most of the concepts that new philosophical practices need for their self-reflection have been already developed in academic philosophy. That is why the quandaries and dilemmas of philosophical practices can help academic philosophy to recognise its inherent practical aspect. The dialogue between the academic perspective and the perspective of philosophical practices is therefore easy to establish when both are faced with their own shortcomings.

In the course of this dialogue, they can help one another to discover inherent elements that have gone unnoticed – one can help the other to establish a new perspective in relation to itself.

IV

In terms of PFC, the link between philosophy and therapy is therefore significant for a number of reasons. Primarily because it enables more articulated dialogue between “new practices of philosophy” (UNESCO, 2007) and academic philosophy. Whereas academic philosophy as the domain of most professional philosophers in the contemporary world often ignores philosophical practices and considers them as alien to philosophy as such, philosophy as therapy is a domain where the authorities of philosophy, i.e. the authors of the classics of traditional academic philosophy, can often be found reflecting on philosophy in more practical terms – as philosophical practice.

It therefore makes sense to review the relationship between PFC and a philosopher who is an authority in contemporary academic philosophy and whose works also explicitly refer to therapy. Ludwig Wittgenstein is a case in point: not only that he is a renowned author whose works are subjects of detailed studies and numerous comments, but he is also the founder of a philosophical approach that remains very topical within academic philosophy. In this context it is irrelevant that the very understanding of Wittgenstein as an academic philosopher might be incorrect and in opposition to the very spirit of his philosophy, which is *antiphilosophy* according to Alain Badiou (Badiou, 2011).

For the vitality of philosophical practices such as PFC it is crucial that they do not settle down with being merely practices of philosophy, they should instead stay in contact with contemporary (abstract, theoretical) philosophical reflection. This link can be strengthened by engaging in a dialogue with academic philosophy. This dialogue can be facilitated if PFC manages to demonstrate again and again that PFC is not something alien to academic philosophy, but that it is in fact very much loyal to the spirit of the tradition that academic philosophy considers its own. By advocating his concept of *antiphilosophy*, Badiou highlights the well-known but somewhat suppressed truth that some of the philosophers who constitute the canon of contemporary academic philosophy were extremely critical of the established philosophy and of philosophical methods used at universities.

The analysis of the relationship between PFC and academic philosophy might pave the way for a reflection on the internal structure of both domains and may well undermine certain convictions. Instead of considering practical philosophy as an impoverished form of philosophical reflection, this analysis might reveal what a limited view academic philosophy has of its own tradition. On the other hand, this is also an opportunity for PFC to engage in self-reflection: by studying the differences and similarities between itself and a philosophical practice that is fundamentally different. By striving to answer the question “What is philosophy?”, it may well discover new aspects of its own presuppositions, possibilities and weaknesses.

V

Researchers who have been searching for the philosophical sources of Lipman’s concept of philosophy for children were mostly focused on American pragmatists, i.e. John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead, and Justus Buchler (Daniel, 1997, 14). In parallel to this search for the intellectual sources of PFC, a quest is underway for new philosophical connections and convergence in relation to contemporary philosophical reflection. Most authors presenting PFC to the general public point out that PFC is not related to any specific tradition and it is therefore open to liaisons with various traditions, which means that it can easily be adapted to any cultural or intellectual environment. However, there is an exception.

Joanna Haynes opens her chapter on the roots of philosophical inquiry by stating that:

“The roots of this practice originate in a number of different philosophical traditions. Practitioners may emphasise different aspects of it according to their own beliefs, influences and circumstances.” (Haynes, 2008, 55)

However, she goes on saying that: “It is associated strongly with Plato’s teacher, the Greek philosopher Socrates” (Haynes, 2008, 55). Robert Fischer takes a similar view by linking PFC to dialogic thinking, which is in itself related to the tradition established by Socrates (Fisher, 2008, 138). It seems that in many ways the model for PFC is the image of Socrates asking questions, wondering, guiding his interlocutors.

The assumptions that philosophy consists of questioning that is aimed at re-examining one’s own life and that an “unexamined life is

not worth living” represent the cornerstones of PFC and its endeavor for critical thinking and intellectual autonomy. In this context, Socratic questioning is crucial for children who are taking part in the community of inquiry as well as for the adult acting as facilitator who stimulates their reflection process by asking Socratic questions. At first, children perceive questions as a framework in which the inquiry takes place and then go on to internalise the process by integrating this framework into their own intellectual world. Lipman as the founder of PFC also considers Socrates a key figure:

“The paradigm of doing philosophy is the towering, solitary figure of Socrates, for whom philosophy was neither an acquisition nor profession but a way of life. What Socrates models for us is not philosophy known or philosophy applied but philosophy practised. He challenges us to acknowledge that philosophy as deed, as form of life, is something that any of us can emulate.” (Lipman, 1988, 12)

This is in no way an insignificant reference, since Socrates is one of the founders of philosophy. Western philosophy may indeed be a series of comments to Plato, however Plato considered himself to be a student of Socrates. If Plato is the father of Western philosophy, Socrates is not merely the father of the father, but a person the father strives to understand. Nevertheless, Socrates as a role-model does have a weakness. He lived in a different world and was engaged in reflections in a different era. The reference to Socrates therefore always begs the question on how would Socrates act in modern times. And if there ever was a clear parallel to Socrates in contemporary philosophy, it is definitely Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The two authors have a lot in common. They both claim that they do not offer any truths or advocate any theory. They both emphasise reflection and question generally accepted and self-evident truths. They both have a specific approach to writing: Socrates never wrote anything, whereas Wittgenstein constantly redrafted his notes and published a single text only that he spent the rest of his life criticising. Both were equally passionate about philosophy and it was this passion that determined their entire lives (Genova, 1995, 7).

According to David G. Stern, Wittgenstein’s position that philosophy does not advance any thesis puts him in contradiction with most modern philosophy, yet this very position also classifies him under the philosophical tradition that has its origin in the Platonic theory of recol-

lection. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the two approaches: according to Plato, learning is based on the recollection of knowledge which was in one's possession in a previous life, while Wittgenstein emphasises the awareness of what one already knows without being able to put this tacit knowledge into words (Stern, 1995, 17). Norman Malcolm also mentions a conversation in which Wittgenstein himself pointed out the similarity between his approach to philosophy and the "Socratic doctrine that knowledge is reminiscence" (Malcolm, 1984, 44).

On the other hand, one of the key features of Wittgenstein's later work is his critique of essentialism. Essentialism, for which Gareth Hallett (Hallett, 1991) claims to be a specific characteristic of Western thought, can easily be illustrated using Plato's theory of ideas, according to which there is a particular class of entities – the universals – that cannot be perceived by senses. When Socrates asks about the definition of something, he is in a search of the essence of the thing to be defined. Throughout the tradition of Western philosophy, this essence has been referred to under a number of different names, such as *universal*, *essence*, *general idea*. This very position – that words are related to an abstract essence of things – represents the main object of criticism in Wittgenstein's later work. It is therefore hardly a surprise when Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein quotes Wittgenstein's statement: "that his method could be summed up by saying that it was the exact opposite of that of Socrates" (Monk, 1990, 339).

With Socrates and Wittgenstein being so close in certain terms and poles apart in others and taking into consideration how committed PFC is to Socrates, it is no wonder that references to Wittgenstein are rare. Karin Murris is one of the authors who resort to Wittgenstein when defending PFC. If the main reproach to children is that they are incapable of engaging in philosophy in the way adults do, then this reproach is based on the assumption that children should in fact engage in philosophy in the same way as adults. In an attempt to gauge the scope of this assumption, Murris introduces Wittgenstein and his criticism of traditional philosophy. "Real philosophy", that is supposed to be beyond the capacity of children, is focused on general principles that are used to explain particular cases. According to Wittgenstein, as I shall elaborate next, this is precisely how philosophy creates false problems.

“Wittgenstein says that philosophical problems, metaphorically speaking, are like a disease. They arise when philosophers are misled by the superficial grammar of our language. In the case of the philosophical problem of identity (as in the Ship of Theseus), when a police officer asks you: ‘Please prove your identity’, it is possible to be misled into thinking that ‘identity’ is the name of a thing – emphasised by the fact that a usual response would be to prove our identity by *showing a thing* – passport, driving license, etc. – in response to the demand. It is the language learned from an early age that spreads this ‘disease’ – i.e., assuming a name presupposes the existence of an object.” (Murris, 2014)

Murris refers to Wittgenstein in order to find support for the thesis that academic philosophy cannot be a reason why children should be denied the capability to philosophise, nor can it be a model for philosophy. Not only that adult philosophy cannot be a model for children’s philosophy, but Wittgenstein goes even further with his claim that adult philosophy is wrong philosophy and that the tradition of adult philosophy gives rise to a multitude of problems that philosophy must solve.

Murris uses Wittgenstein to defend PFC from the attacks of adult academic philosophy. She is able to do so because criticism of academic philosophy is a significant aspect of Wittgenstein’s thought. However, the question remains whether Wittgenstein can also be used to improve PFC’s understanding of itself or, in our case, whether Wittgenstein can be used to improve the understanding of the relationship between therapy and PFC.

VI

What is the gist of Wittgenstein’s criticism of philosophy? Robert Fogelin summarises it in the following simple statement:

“Philosophers are led into confusion because they are antecedently disposed to view various uses of language in ways inappropriate to them. This is not usually (or simply) a matter of reasoning from false premises about language but is, instead, a tendency to view language from a skewed or disoriented perspective. The proper task of philosophy – indeed, its whole task – is to induce us to abandon such improper perspective.” (Fogelin 1996, 34)

This attitude towards traditional philosophy can be liberating for PFC. It seems that there is no need for PFC to deal with philosophical tradition because this tradition is not only irrelevant, but in fact even harmful. It is a source of faults and errors and should best be forgot-

ten. For those who have fallen victim to this error, the final purpose of philosophy remains to be criticism of its own former errors. But as we shall see, this view is misleading.

Wittgenstein describes the reasons why philosophers have fallen victim to this error using a number of metaphors, the most renowned of these being:

“It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 103)

The metaphor with the glasses suggests that the source of delusion is not the world or language, but the subject who has a skewed view of the world. However, the aberration does not originate from the subject himself, but from the instrument he is using to enhance his vision. Glasses, which are normally used to correct deficiencies of our eyesight, are used here as a metaphor for the aberration which is preventing subject from seeing things as they are. This image raises questions: Where did these glasses come from and who designed them? Do those glasses represent mistaken philosophical theories that prevent us from seeing the world correctly? If that is the case, the problem can be solved by renouncing philosophy. But even then it remains to be discovered how those mistaken theories came into being.

Yet, for Wittgenstein philosophy is not merely a leisure activity one can simply give up, it is a force that captures a man and does not let him go, like an intractable disease. Therefore the aim of philosophy is to eliminate the desire for philosophy:

“The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 133)

In order for the subject to liberate himself and eliminate the need for philosophy, he requires therapy:

“The philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness.” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 225)

His affliction is not caused by a pair of glasses he could simply take off if they do not function properly, it is the result of questions that philosophers are tormented by, questions that do not lead to understanding but prevent it and act as obstacles on the way towards understand-

ing. Philosophy is thus construed as a therapy and as something that is “purely negative” (Fogelin, 1996, 35). This negativity encompasses two levels. On the one hand, philosophy is forced to criticise mistaken theories, and on the other hand, it must lead towards the elimination of the urge for a certain lack of understanding and a certain effort to resolve things.

Anthony Kenny also mentions two aims of philosophy according to Wittgenstein, but his focus is slightly different. The first aim of philosophy is therapeutic and pursues the goal not of a solution, but of dissolution of philosophical problems, while its second aim is to describe the actual functioning of language. The therapeutic mission of philosophy is not to directly treat the desire, but to generate internal criticism of the products of philosophy. Its task is “the destruction of philosophical illusion, the castles in the air built by bad philosophy” (Kenny, 2008, 139).

The therapeutic process is not a negation claiming that the problems are false and should therefore be abandoned. In order to eliminate the urge for philosophy, problems must be perceived as real problems and solutions as real solutions. Philosophers live in a world of illusion and the therapy consists in accepting their theses, entering their world and demonstrating the fallacy of their world from within. This is a type of *reductio ad absurdum*, an internal negation of mistaken theories, which indirectly also entails a negation of the erroneous questions that have led to these theories.

The internal criticism of philosophy runs parallel with a different approach to language. Questions originating from an erroneous understanding of language can be dissolved by describing the habitual use of terms and the plurality that is characteristic of everyday language use:

“Someone who wants to say something metaphysical about thought may well be cured of his wish by being reminded of the many different ways in which ‘think’ is used.” (Kenny, 2008, 144)

And next to it, by pointing out the similarities and differences between various human activities in the context of which the use of language becomes meaningful. Kenny’s explanation of the confusion of philosophers is the prevalence of imagination:

“Philosophical confusion, we might say, happens when the imagination takes over the role of the intellect. We have a picture of how a word is used, and the

picture conflicts with our understanding of the word, which is expressed in our actual use of it.” (Kenny, 2008, 145)

It seems that what Kenny refers to as imagination is in fact closely linked to construction, speculation, the formation of abstract systems of thoughts. Descriptions of the details of practical language use can therefore reveal the fallacy of the philosopher’s picture. Particular examples, descriptions and details of actual language use can shake the foundations of philosophical speculation. In this sense, philosophy simply leaves everything as it is:

“Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 126)

Philosophy as therapy does not explain, it merely describes. And it is this description that can lead the philosopher to open his eyes and realize that his speculations are no more than castles in the sky.

VII

Why do philosophical delusions occur? Where do the glasses that distort the philosopher’s vision come from? In an attempt to determine Wittgenstein’s place among twentieth century philosophers, Hacker compiles a list of reasons that Wittgenstein considers to be behind philosophers’ delusions. Wittgenstein finds these reasons not only in the philosophers themselves and in the obsessions tormenting them; he (also) finds causes of the philosophers’ affliction external to them. To a certain extent, transgression and the loss of sense are to be expected, since philosophers are in search of the boundaries of sense. As they are never far from the edge, there is always a risk of overstepping the line. However, it is still valid that “the primary source of philosophical confusion and superstition is language itself” (Hacker, 1997, 115). In this respect, the basic problem lies in the finite number of grammatical structures and expressions that must cater for a virtually infinite variety and heterogeneity of content. *The form of a question* can be misleading as to the form of the answer: the grammatical form is similar, but the same question may require different types of answers depending on the subject matter. Inquiries about physical objects require different responses than inquiries about intentions, beliefs or wishes. The same goes for *types of expressions*. Substantives suggest a reference to sub-

stance, even though numbers and thoughts, for instance, can hardly be considered as substance. Adjectives give the impression of denoting a quality, but that is often not the case. The limits of grammatical and language forms conceal the abundance of concepts.

“We generate philosophical bafflement when we transpose a concept from one domain to another, unwittingly assuming that the logical connections which hold in the one domain will hold in the other too.” (Hacker, 1997, 116)

As a result of its complexity, its unmethodical nature and its opacity, language is often misleading. The root of the problem is that language encompasses a countless plurality of language games. These coexist, stacked one on top of the other, like a city that has emerged throughout the centuries. It is difficult to find one’s bearings, as there is no simple logic or city map to follow. Finding one’s bearings means becoming familiar with the architecture of the city. As Wittgenstein puts it – “Language is labyrinth of paths” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 243) – and it is easy to get lost in it. However, one is only truly lost when one is not aware of the chaotic nature of these language paths. That is when language truly has the power to bewitch and philosophy becomes a “struggle against the bewitchment of our intellect by means of language” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 109).

In addition to reasons strictly related to language, Hacker also lists a number of cultural reasons. Paradigms can be captivating and are often imposed on phenomena that differ significantly from one another. Descartes, for instance, was blinded by the paradigm of knowledge which required a firm foundation. Enslaving images can play a similar role. Wittgenstein speaks of a “picture that holds us captive” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 115). Furthermore, striving for the highest possible level of generality is a characteristic of philosophy. This “craving for generality” (Wittgenstein, 1992, 17) can also be the source of philosophical delusion, which is why the “depth traditionally associated with philosophy is an illusion” (Wittgenstein, 1997, par. 113).

Philosophy cannot break out of the world and reveal its metaphysical structure. Hence, Wittgenstein is not merely trying to express his aversion to generality, but is pointing to the risk entailed in the separation from the concrete and to the limit of sense, as one can never step out beyond one’s own experience. Another source of delusion is science or rather the tendency that philosophy should aspire to science as a model. Furthermore, “the will to illusion” (Hacker, 1997, 111) can

also be a contributing factor, as certain fantasies are very appealing because they offer safety and protection to the individual, a fulfilment of one's wishes. According to Hacker, that is why Wittgenstein believes that "work on philosophy is often more work on oneself, on the way one sees things and what one demands from them" (Hacker, 1997, 112).

All this aims to show that it is not only the glasses what gives rise to delusion and illusions: language as such is prone to be misleading and the same is true of culture! Ackermann explains how language is suited to everyday use, how closely it is intertwined with everyday life that provides it with stability. In philosophy, we often lose sight of this context and lose ourselves in generalizations – in "nonsensical philosophical generalization" (Ackermann, 1988, 158). Not every generalization is reproachable, but it seems that generalization always bears the risk of getting out of hand and becoming misleading – unless we keep our feet firmly on the ground and stay in contact with the concreteness of life.

Both linguistic and cultural delusions originate from the nature of the subject and are not – crucially – merely the result of poor philosophy from the past. Ludwig Nagl emphasises that delusions are tenacious and that it is in the very nature of man that he is constantly exposed to them and that he always has to make an effort to avoid them:

"It would, e.g., be a misunderstanding to proclaim that 'metaphysics' can be quickly 'set aside' and forgotten (an idea that Rortyan neopragmatists share with Logical Empiricist): Wittgenstein, in strict opposition to this, keeps emphasizing that the *conditio humana* is a condition of ongoing – 'struggles' against those 'false pictures' that 'hold us captive' and distort our experiences." (Nagl, 2011, 158)

Philosophical therapy thus represents a general and indispensable effort to resist erroneous understanding. In an effort to enhance the understanding of this concept, one is tempted to summarize Wittgenstein's understanding of therapy in a few systematic and well-structured theses. But in doing so, one would succumb to what Wittgenstein refers to as "craving for generality", which he considers to be one of the tendencies that lead to philosophical confusions.

VIII

In reference to the discussion above, it can be said that the portrayal of children as being weak, helpless, and in need of protection, which

can be found in the culture of therapy, is in fact a “false picture that hold us captive”, which enslaves the modern culture and which philosophy must denounce. The eradication of this view is not a simple task and does not only pertain to philosophers.

On the other hand, the fact that authors are so eager to classify PFC as a manifestation of the culture of therapy without any detailed analysis is in itself a case of “craving for generality” which Wittgenstein’s philosophical therapy strives to defeat. This points to a two-fold link between PFC and the therapy culture: this culture is the context in which the children and teachers who participate in the programme of philosophy for children live. To a certain extent, this context contributes to the popularity of PFC: elements of the programme such as proactive methods, dialogue and expressing one’s own opinion will be particularly attractive to parents who are trapped in the picture generated by the therapy culture. At the same time, PFC rejects the image of children as being weak and incapable of independent thinking and judgment. This opposition is an integral part of the PFC process which is based on children’s capacity for independent thinking and judgment and is aimed at fostering these very skills. This shows that the therapy culture both enhances and undermines PFC: it enhances it by contributing to the popularity of certain methods of PFC in the general public, and undermines it by advocating an image of children that is the exact opposite of how children are perceived in PFC.

Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy as therapy offers the tools required for an internal criticism of views that hold us captive in a certain culture. By focusing on the description of language and the world in their concreteness and plurality, he forces philosophy to come from the lofty academic heights down to the level of daily life, everyday language and the experience of life that is common to everyone, including children. This means that philosophy is in fact a therapy: therapy both for the “therapy culture” and for philosophy which is losing contact with people’s everyday experience. Wittgenstein’s philosophy as therapy thus represents a suitable model for PFC and there is no reason why PFC should avoid the concept of therapy – it should embrace it and imbue it with the content that has been developed by the philosophical tradition at the junction between philosophy and therapy. Furthermore, PFC can also apply Wittgensteinian therapy to itself, to its own presuppositions, to see if any of them are pictures which are holding it captive.

The therapeutic philosophy that Wittgenstein believes to be liberating and that is aimed at “freeing us from false pictures” and “breaking our bad habits of thought” (Hutto, 2006, 218) can be used to encourage PFC to review its own fundamental positions on children and the goals of PFC. It should also serve as an encouragement for the further development of PFC, so that in addition to allowing children to develop certain skills and adopt various ways of thinking, PFC might also be a space that allows emancipation from the generally accepted goals of education listed above, i.e. a space where “individuals-in-their-uniqueness might come into the world” (Biesta, 2011, 317).

The question that might still arise is why to link PFC, which is centred on philosophic questioning, to an author who claims to be in pursuit of eliminating philosophical questions. The first reason is that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is not going after the elimination of philosophical questions. What his philosophy actually does is opening up the space for reflection on philosophical questions in relation to the *ordinariness of language and human life*, i.e. in relation to the world which is also the children’s world. The second reason is that Wittgenstein adopts a very radical approach in his search for the borders of philosophy. The similar could be said for PFC as well which, to a certain extent, is questioning the borders of philosophy by its very existence. The third reason is that Wittgenstein is very radical in testing and reviewing his own theses. PFC would benefit from adopting the same approach, both in relation to the presuppositions on which the movement is founded and in relation to the convictions that children and their teachers have acquired from their cultural environment, i.e. the theses that have become part of their identity to such an extent that they are themselves completely unaware of them.

References

- Ackermann, Robert J. (1988), *Wittgenstein’s City*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Badiou, Alain (2011), *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, New York: Verso.
- Biesta, Gert (2011), “Philosophy, Exposure and Children: How to Resist the Instrumentalisation of Philosophy in Education”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 305–319.
- Cohen, Elliot D. (2009), *Critical Thinking Unleashed*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Daniel, Marie-France (1997), *La philosophie et les enfants*, Montréal: De Boeck & Larcier.
- Ecclestone, Kathryn; Hayes, Dennis (2009), *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*, New York: Routledge.
- Fisher, Robert (2008), *Teaching Thinking. Philosophical Enquiry in the Classroom*, London: Continuum.
- Fogelin, Robert J. (1996), "Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy", in: Hans Sluga & David G. Sterba (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Furedi, Frank (2004), *Therapy Culture: Creating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*, London: Routledge.
- Gardner, Susan (2009), *Thinking Your Way to Freedom*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Genova, Judith (1995), *Wittgenstein. A Way of Seeing*, London: Routledge.
- Hacker, P.M.S. (1997), *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hadot, Pierre (2002), *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Cambridge (MA): The Belknap Press.
- Hallet, Gareth L. (1991), *Essentialism. A Wittgensteinian Critique*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Haynes, Joanna (2008), *Children as Philosopher*, London: Routledge.
- Haynes, Joanna (2014), "Is Philosophy for Children Characteristic of the 'Therapeutic Turn' in Education". Available at: https://www.philosophy-of-education.org/conferences/pdfs/MurrisSymposium_JoannaHaynes.pdf; accessed January 27, 2014.
- Hutto, Daniel D. (2006), *Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy*, New York: Palgrave.
- Kenny, Anthony (2008), "Philosophy States Only What Everyone Admits", in: Anthony Kenny, *From Empedocles to Wittgenstein*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lipman, Matthew (1988), *Philosophy Goes to School*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lipman, Matthew (2008), *A Life in Teaching: An Autobiography*, Montclair: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Malcolm, Norman (1984), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Monk, Ray (1990), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of a Genius*, New York: Macmillan.

- Murris, Karrin (2014), "Can Children do Philosophy?". Available at: www.slow-whoop.org/recipient/tsf/ccdp.doc; accessed January 27, 2014.
- Nagl, Ludwig (2001), "How Hard I Find It to See What Is Right in Front of Me", in: Nagl, Ludwig & Mouffe, Chantal (eds.), *The Legacy of Wittgenstein: Pragmatism or Deconstruction*, Vienna: Lang.
- Sluga, Hans; Sterba, David G. (eds.) (1996), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stern, David G. (1995), *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UNESCO (2007), *Philosophy, A School of Freedom*, Paris: UNESCO.
- Wisnewski, Jeremy J. (2003), "Five Forms of Philosophical Therapy", *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 74, No. 1, pp. 53–79.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1992), *The Blue and Brown Books*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1997), *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell.

FILOZOFIJA ZA DJECU I FILOZOFIJA KAO TERAPIJA

Marjan Šimenc

Tekst se temelji na kritici filozofije za djecu (Philosophy for Children, PFC) kada je se smatra dijelom kulture terapije. Kritika tvrdi da PFC tretira djecu kao »krhku i ranjivu« te da PFC program, koji je prvotno bio usmjeren na poboljšanje društvenih i emocionalnih vještina, zapravo doprinosi nesamostalnosti i slabosti djece. Tekst želi obraniti PFC kroz argumente protiv takvoga pogrešnog pristupa. U nastavku se donosi analiza koncepta iz kojega izvire kritika – odnosa između filozofije i terapije. U ovome kontekstu referira se na Wittgensteinov koncept filozofije kao terapije koji se pokazuje korisnim za refleksiju na vezu između akademske filozofije i filozofske prakse, kao i za razmatranje temeljnih ciljeva filozofije za djecu.

Ključne riječi: *filozofija za djecu, kultura terapije, filozofija kao terapija, Ludwig Wittgenstein*